

to Inertia. Change would make new effort necessary to win routine and habit. It is therefore irksome. The masses, moreover, have not the power to reach out after "improvements," or to plan steps of change by which needs might be better satisfied. The mores of any society, at a period, may be characterized by the promptness or reluctance of the masses to imitate the ways of the classes. It is a question of the first importance for the historian whether the mores of the historical classes of which he finds evidence in documentary remains penetrated the masses or not. The masses are the real bearers of the mores of the society. They carry tradition. The folkways are their ways. They accept influence or leadership, and they imitate, but they do so as they see fit, being controlled by their notions and tastes previously acquired. They may accept standards of character and action from the classes, or from foreigners, or from literature, or from a new religion, but whatever they take up they assimilate and make it a part of their own mores, which they then transmit by tradition, defend in its integrity, and refuse to discard again. Consequently the writings of the literary class may not represent the faiths, notions, tastes, standards, etc., of the masses at all. The literature of the first Christian centuries shows us scarcely anything of the mores of the time, as they existed in the faith and practice of the masses. Every group takes out of a new religion which is offered to it just what it can assimilate with its own traditional mores. Christianity was a very different thing amongst Jews, Egyptians, Greeks, Germans, and Slavs. It would be a great mistake to suppose that any people ever accepted and held philosophical or

religious
teaching as it was offered to them, and as we find it
recorded in
the books of the teachers. The mores of the
masses admit of
no such sudden and massive modification by
doctrinal teaching.
The process of assimilation is slow, and it is
attended by modi-
fying influences at every stage. What the classes
adopt, be it
good or ill, may be found pervading the mass after
generations,
but it will appear as a resultant of all the
vicissitudes of the folk-
ways in the interval. " It was the most frightful
feature of the
corruption of ancient Rome, that it extended
through every class